LAZARRE

...By...

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(Based Upon the Mystery Surrounding the Fate of the Dauphin, Son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette)

CHAPTER I.

I REMEMBER poising naked upon a rock, ready to dive into Lake George. This memory stands at the end of a diminishing vista; the extreme point of coherent recollection. My body and muscular limbs reflected in the water filled me with savage pride.

I knew, as the beast knows its herd, that my mother Marianne was hanging the pot over the fire pit in the center of our lodge. The children were playing with other papooses, and my father was hunting down the lake. The hunting and fishing were good, and we had plenty of meat. Skenedonk, whom I considered a person belonging to myself, was stripping more slowly on the rock behind me. We were heated with wood ranging. Aboriginal life, primeval and vigor giving, lay behind me when I plunged expecting to strike out under the delicious forest shadow.

When I came up the sun had vanished, the woods and their shadow were gone. So were the Indian children playing on the shore, and the shore with them. My mother Marianne might still be hanging her pot in the lodge. But all the hunting lodges of our people were as completely lost as if I had entered another world.

My head was bandaged, as I discovered when I turned it to look around. The walls were not the log walls of our lodge, chinked with moss and topped by a bark roof. On the contrary, they were grander than the inside of St. Regis church, where I took my first communion, though that was built of stone. These walls were paneled, as I learned afterward to call that noble finishing, and ornamented with pictures, and crystal sockets for candles. The use of the crystal sockets was evident, for one shaded wax light burned near me. The ceiling was not composed of wooden beams like some Canadian houses, but divided itself into panels also, reflecting the light with a dark rosy shining. Lace work finer than a priest's white garments fluttered at the windows.

I had dived early in the afternoon, and it was night. Instead of finding myself still stripped for swimming, I had a loose robe around me, and a coverlet drawn up to my armpits. The couch under me was by no means of hemlock twigs and skins, like our bunks at home, but soft and rich. I wondered if I had died and gone to heaven. And just then the Virgin moved past my head and stood looking down at me. I started to jump out of a window, but felt so little power to move that I only twitched and pretended to be asleep and watched her as we sighted game, with eyes nearly shut. She had a poppet of a child on one arm that sat up instead of leaning against her shoulder, and looked at me, too. The poppet had a cap on its head and was dressed in lace, and she wore a white dress that let her neck and arms out, but covered her to the ground. This was remarkable, as the Indian women covered their necks and arms and wore their petticoats short. I could see this image breathe, which was a marvel, and the color moving under her white skin. Her eyes seemed to go through you and search all the veins, sending a shiver of pleasure down your back.

Now I knew after the first start that she was a living girl holding a living baby, and when my father, Thomas Williams, appeared at the door of the room, it was certain I could not be in heaven. It came over me in a flash that I myself was changed. In spite of the bandages my head was as clear as if all its faculties were washed and newly arranged. I could look back into my life and perceive things that I had only sensed as a dumb brute. A fish thawed out after being frozen and reanimated through every sparkling scale and tremulous fin could not have felt its resurrection more keenly. My broken head gave me no trouble at all.

The girl and baby disappeared as soon as I saw my father, which was not surprising, for he could not be called a prepossessing half breed. His lower lip protruded and hung sullenly. He had heavy brows and a shaggy thatch of hair. Our St. Regis Iroquois kept to the buckskins, though they often had hunting shirts of fulled flannel. And my father's buckskins were very dirty.

A little man, that I did not know was in the room, shuffled across the floor to keep my father from entering. Around the base of his head he had a thin curtain of hair scarcely reaching his shoulders. His nose pointed upward. Its tip was the shape of a candle extinguisher. He wore horn spectacles and knee breeches, waistcoat and coat of black like the ink which fades to brown in a drying ink horn. He put his hands together and took them apart uncertainly, and shot out his lip and frowned, as if he had a universal grudge and dared not vent it.

He said something in a language I did not understand, and my father made no answer. Then he began a kind of Anglo-French, worse than the patois we used at St. Regis when we did not speak Iroquois. I made out the talk between the two, understanding each without hesitation.

"Sir, who are you?"

"The chief, Thomas Williams," answered my father.

"Pardon me, sir; but you are unmistakably an Indian."

"Iroquois chief," said my father. "Mohawk."

"That being the case, what authority have you for calling yourself Thomas Williams?" challenged the little man.

"Thomas Williams is my name."

"Impossible, sir! Skenedonk, the Oneida, does not assume so much. He lays no claim to William Jones or John Smith, or some other honest British name."

The chief maintained silent dignity.

"Come, sir, let me have your Indian name! I can hear it if I cannot repeat it."

Silently contemptuous, my father turned toward me.

"Stop, sir!" the man in the horn spectacles cried. "What do you want?"

"I want my boy."

"Your boy? This lad is white."

"My grandmother was white," condescended the chief. "A white prisoner from Deerfield. Eunice Williams."

"I see, sir. You get your Williams from the Yankees. And is this lad's mother white, too?"

"No. Mohawk."

"Why, man, his body is like milk! He is no son of yours."

The chief marched toward me.

"Let him alone! If you try to drag him out of the manor I will appeal to the authority of Le Ray de Chaumont."

My father spoke to me with sharp authority—

"Lazarre!"

"What do you call him?" the little man inquired, ambling beside the chief.

"Eleazer Williams is his name. But in the lodges, at St. Regis, everywhere, it is Lazarre."

"How old is he?"

"About eighteen years."

"Well, Thomas Williams," said my fretful guardian, his antagonism melting to patronage, "I will tell you who I am, and then you can feel no anxiety. I am Dr. Chantry, physician to the Count de Chaumont. The lad cut his head open on a rock, diving in the lake, and has remained unconscious ever since. This is partly due to an opiate I have administered to insure complete quiet, and he will not awake for several hours yet. He received the best surgery as soon as he was brought here and placed in my hands by the educated Oneida, Skenedonk."

"I was not near the lodge," said my father. "I was down the lake, fishing."

"I have bled him once, and shall bleed him again, though the rock did that pretty effectively. But these strapping young creatures need frequent blood letting."

The chief gave him no thanks, and I myself resolved to knock the little doctor down if he came near me with a knife.

"In the absence of Count de Chaumont, Thomas," he proceeded, "I may direct you to go and knock on the cook's door and ask for something to eat before you go home."

"I stay here," responded my father.

"There is not the slightest need of anybody's watching beside the lad tonight. I was about to retire when you were permitted to enter. He is sleeping like an infant."

"He belongs to me," the chief said.

Dr. Chantry jumped at the chief in rage.

"For God's sake, shut up and go about your business!"

My father's hand was on his hunting knife, but he grunted and said nothing. Dr. Chantry himself withdrew from the room and left the Indian in possession.

My father sat down on the floor at the foot of my couch, where the wax light threw his shadow, exaggerating its unmoving profile. I noticed one of the chairs he disdained as useless, though when eating or drinking with white men he sat at table with them. The chair I saw was one that I faintly recognized as furniture of some previous experience, slim legged, gracefully curved and brocaded. Brocaded was the word. I studied it until I fell asleep.

The sun, shining through the protected windows, instead of glaring into our lodge door, showed my father sitting in the same position when I woke and Skenedonk at my side. I liked the educated Iroquois. He was about ten years my senior. He had been taken to France when a stripling and was much bound to the whites, though living with his own tribe. Skenedonk had the mildest brown eyes I ever saw outside a deer's head. He was a bald Indian with one small scalp lock.

I tossed the cover back to spring out of bed with a whoop. But a woman in a high cap with ribbons hanging down to her heels and a dress short enough to show her shoes stepped into the room and made a courtesy. Her face fell easily into creases when she talked and gave you the feeling that it was too soft of flesh. Indeed, her eyes were cushioned all around. She spoke and Skenedonk answered her in French. The meaning of every word broke through my mind as fire breaks through paper.

"Mme. de Ferrier sent me to inquire how the young gentleman is."

Skenedonk lessened the rims around his eyes. My father grunted.

"Did Mme. de Ferrier say 'the young gentleman?'" Skenedonk inquired.

"I was told to inquire. I am her servant Ernestine," said the woman, her face creased with the anxiety of responding to questions.

"Tell Mme. de Ferrier that the young gentleman is much better and will go home to the lodges today."

"She said I was to wait upon him and give him his breakfast under the doctor's direction."

"Say with thanks to Mme. de Ferrier that I wait upon him."

Ernestine again courtesied and made way for Dr. Chantry. He came in quite good natured and greeted all of us, his inferiors, with a humility I then thought touching, but learned afterward to distrust. My head already felt the healing blood, and I was ravenous for food. He bound it with fresh bandages and opened a box full of glittering knives, taking out a small sheath. From this he made a point of steel spring like lightning.

"We will bring the wholesome lancet again into play, my lad," said Dr. Chantry. I waited in uncertainty with my feet on the floor and my hands on the side of the couch while he carefully removed coat and waistcoat and turned up his sleeves.

"Ernestine, bring the basin," he commanded.

My father may have thought the doctor was about to inflict a vicarious puncture on himself. Skenedonk, with respect for civilized surgery, waited. I did not wait. The operator bared me to the elbow and showed a piece of plaster already sticking on my arm. The conviction of being outraged in my person came upon me mightily, and, snatching the wholesome lancet, I turned its spring upon the doctor. He yelled. I leaped through the door like a deer and ran barefooted, the loose robe curdling above my knees. I had the fleetest foot among the Indian racers, and was going to throw the garment away for the pure joy of feeling the air slide past my naked body, when I saw the girl and poppet baby who had looked at me during my first consciousness. They were sitting on a blanket under the trees of De Chaumont's park, which deepened into wilderness.

The baby put up a lip, and the girl surrounded it with her arm, dividing her sympathy with me. I must have been a charming object. Though ravenous for food and broken headed, I forgot my state and turned off the road of escape to stare at her like a tame deer.

She lowered her eyes wisely, and I got near enough without taking fright to see a book spread open on the blanket, showing two illuminated pages. Something parted in me. I saw my mother as I had seen her in some past life—not Marianne, the Mohawk, wife of Thomas Williams, but a fair, oval faced mother with arched brows. I saw even her pointed waist and puffed skirts and the lace around her open neck. She held the book in her hands and read to me from it.

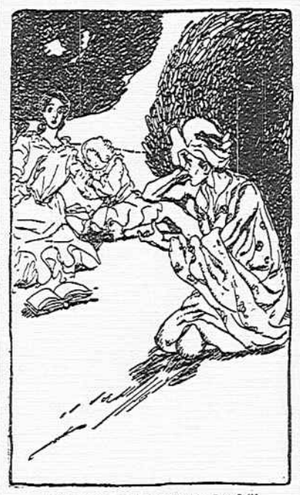
I dropped on my knees and stretched my arms above my head, crying aloud as women cry, with gasps and chokings in sudden bereavement. Nebulous memories twisted all around me and I could grasp nothing. I raged for what had been mine—for some high estate out of which I had fallen into degradation. I clawed the ground in what must have seemed convulsions to the girl. Her poppet cried and she hushed it.

"Give me my mother's book!" I strangled out of the depths of my throat, and repeated, as if torn by a devil, "Give me my mother's book!"

She blanched so white that her lips looked seared, and instead of disputing my claim or inquiring about my mother or telling me to begone she was up on her feet. Taking her dress in her finger tips and settling back almost to the ground in the most beautiful obeisance I ever saw, she said:

"Sire!"

Neither in Iroquois nor in Iroquois-French had such a name been given to me before. I had a long title signifying tree cutter, which belonged to every chief of our family. But that word—"Sire!"—and her deep reverence seemed to atone in some way for what I had lost. I sat up, quieting myself, still moved as water heaves. She put the missal on the lap of my single garment and drew back a step, formally standing. My scarred ankles, at which the Indian children used to point, were exposed to her gaze, for I never would sit on them after the manner of the tribe.



"Give me my mother's book!"

De Chaumont's manor house, facing a winding avenue, could be seen from where we were. It was of stone, built to inclose a court on three sides, in the form that I afterward recognized as that of French palaces. There were a great many flowers in the court, and vines covered the ends of the wings. All those misty half remembered hunting seasons that I had spent on Lake George were not without some knowledge. The chimneys and roofs of Le Ray de Chaumont's manor often looked at me through trees as I steered my boat among the islands. He was a great landowner, having more than 300,000 acres of wilderness. And he was friendly with both Indians and Americans. His figure did not mean much to me when I saw it, being merely a type of wealth, and wealth extends little power into the wilderness.

The poppet of a child climbed up and held to the girl's dress. She stooped over and kissed it, saying, "Sit down, Paul." The toy human being seemed full of intelligence, and after the first protest examined me fearlessly, with enchanting smiles about the mouth and eyes.

That a child should be the appendage of such a very young creature as the girl surprised me no more than if it had been a fawn or a dog. In the vivid moments of my first rousing to life I had seen her with Paul in her arms, and he remained part of her.

We heard a rush of horses up the avenue, and out of the woods came Le Ray de Chaumont and his groom, the wealthy landowner equipped in gentleman's riding dress from his spurs to his hat. He made a fine show, whip hand on his hip and back erect as a pine tree. He was a man in middle life, but he reined up and dismounted with the swift agility of a youth and sent his horse away with the groom as soon as he saw the girl run across the grass to meet him. Taking her hand he bowed over it and kissed it with pleasing ceremony, of which I approved. But I could not be mistaken in De Chaumont's opinion of me. He pointed his whip handle at me, exclaiming:

"What—that scarecrow, madame?"

CHAPTER II.

"BUT look at him," she urged.

"I recognize first," said De Chaumont as he sauntered, "an old robe of my own."

"His mother was reduced to coarse serge, I have been told."

"You speak of an august lady, my dear Eagle. But this is Chief Williams' boy. He has been at the hunting lodges every summer since I came into the wilderness. There you see his father, the half breed Mohawk."

"I saw the dauphin in London, count. I was a little child, but his scarred ankles and wrists and forehead are not easily forgotten."

"The dauphin died in the Temple, Eagle."

"My father and Philippe never believed that."

"Your father and Philippe were very mad royalists."

"And you have gone over to Bonaparte. They said that boy had all the traits of the Bourbons, even to the shaping of his ear."

"A Bourbon ear hears nothing but Bonaparte in these days," said De Chaumont. "How do you know this is the same boy you saw in London?"

"Last night while he was lying unconscious, after Dr. Chantry bandaged his head and bled him, I went in to see if I might be of use. He was like some one I had seen. But I did not know him until a moment ago. He ran out of the house like a wild Indian. Then he saw us sitting here and came and fell down on his knees at sight of that missal. I saw his scars. He claimed the book as his mother's—and you know, count, it was his mother's!"

"My dear child, whenever an Indian wants a present he dreams that you give it to him, or he claims it. Chief Williams' boy wanted your valuable illuminated book. I only wonder he had the taste. The rings on your hands are more to an Indian's liking."

"But he is not an Indian, count. He is as white as we are."

"That signifies nothing. Plenty of white children have been brought up among the tribes. Chief Williams' grandmother, I have heard, was a Yankee woman."

Not one word of their rapid talk escaped an ear trained to faintest noises in the woods. I felt like a tree, well set up and sound, but rooted and voiceless in my ignorant helplessness before the two so frankly considering me.

My father stopped when he saw Mme. de Ferrier and called to me in Iroquois. It was plain that he and Dr. Chantry disagreed. Skenedonk, put out of countenance by my behavior and the stubbornness of the chief, looked ready to lay his hand upon his mouth in sign of being confounded before white men, for his learning had altered none of his inherited instincts.

But as for me, I was as De Chaumont had said, Chief Williams' boy, faint from blood letting and twenty-four hours' fasting, and the father's command reminded me of the mother's dinner pot. I stood up erect and drew the flowered silk robe around me. It would have been easier to walk on burning coals, but I felt obliged to return the book to Mme. de Ferrier. She would not take it. I closed her grasp upon it, and, stooping, saluted her hand with courtesy as De Chaumont had done. If he had roared, I must have done this devoir. But all he did was to widen his eyes and strike his leg with his riding whip.

The chief paddled and I sat naked in our canoe—for we left the flowered robe with a horse boy at the stables—the sun warm upon my skin, the lake's blue glamour affecting me like enchantment.

Neither love nor aversion was associated with my father. I took my head between my hands and tried to remember a face that was associated with aversion.

"Father," I inquired, "was anybody ever cruel to me?"

He looked startled, but spoke harshly.

"What have you got in your head? These white people have been making a fool of you."

"I remember better today than I ever remembered before. I am different. I was a child, but today manhood has come. Father, what is a dauphin?"

The chief made no answer.

"What is a temple? Is it a church, like ours at St. Regis?"

"Ask the priest."

"Do you know what Bourbon is, father—particularly a Bourbon ear?"

"Nothing that concerns you."

"But how could I have a Bourbon ear if it didn't concern me?"

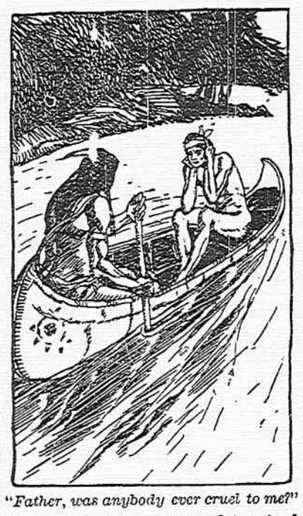
"Who said you had such an ear?"

"Mme. de Ferrier."

The chief grunted.

"At least she told De Chaumont," I repeated exactly, "I was the boy she saw in London that her father said had all the traits of the Bourbons. Where is London?"

The chief paddled without replying. Finding him so ignorant on all points of the conversation, or so determined to put me down, I gazed awhile at our shadow gliding in the water and then began again.



"Father, was anybody ever cruel to me?"

"Father, do you happen to know who Bonaparte is?"

This time he answered.

"Bonaparte is a great soldier."

"Is he a white man or an Indian?"

"He is a Frenchman."

I meditated on the Frenchmen I dimly remembered about St. Regis. They were undersized fellows, very apt to weep when their emotions were stirred. I could whip them all.

"Did he ever come to St. Regis?"

The chief again grunted.

"Does France come to St. Regis?" he retorted with an impatient question.

"What is France, father?"

"A country."

"Shall we ever go there to hunt?"

"Shall we ever go the other side of the sunrise to hunt? France is the other side of the sunrise. Talk to the squaws."

Though rebuked, I determined to do it if any information could be got out of them.

My mother Marianne fed me, and, when I lay down dizzy in the bunk, covered me. The family must have thought it was natural sleep. But it was a fainting collapse, which took me more than once afterward as suddenly as a blow on the head when my faculties were most needed. Whether this was caused by the plunge upon the rock or the dim life from which I had emerged I do not know. One moment I saw the children and mothers from the neighboring lodges more interested than my own mother, our smoky rafters and the fire pit in the center of unfloored ground, my clothes hanging over the bunk, and even a dog with his nose in the kettle. And then, as it had been the night before, I waked after many hours.

If Skenedonk had been there I would have asked him to bring me water, with confidence in his natural service. The chief's family was a large one, but not one of my brothers and sisters seemed as near to me as Skenedonk. The apathy of fraternal attachment never caused me any pain. The whole tribe was held dear.

I stripped off Dr. Chantry's unendurable bandages, and put on my clothes, for there were brambles along the path. The lodges and the dogs were still, and I crept like a hunter after game, to avoid waking them. Our village was an irregular camp, each house standing where its owner had pleased to build it on the lake shore. Behind it the blackness of wooded wilderness seemed to stretch to the end of the world.

The spring made a distinct tinkle in the rush of low sounds through the forest. It was fine to wallow, damming the span of escaping water with my fevered head. Physical relief and delicious shuddering coolness ran through me.

From that wet pillow I looked up and thought again of what had happened that day, and particularly of the girl whom De Chaumont had called Mme. de Ferrier and Eagle. Every word that she had spoken passed again before my mind. Possibilities that I had never imagined rayed out from my recumbent body as from the hub of a vast wheel. I was white. I was not an Indian. I had a Bourbon ear. She believed I was a dauphin. What was a dauphin, that she should make such a deep obeisance to it? My father, the chief, recommending me to the squaws, had appeared to know nothing about it.

All that she believed De Chaumont denied. The rich book which stirred such torment in me—"you know it was his mother's!" she said—De Chaumont thought I merely coveted. I can see now that the crude, half savage boy, wallowing in the spring stream, set that woman as high as the highest star above his head, and made her the hope and symbol of his possible best.

A woman's long cry, like the appeal of that one on whom he meditated, echoed through the woods and startled him out of his wallow.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

New Guinea Swamp Dwellers.

Recently the British government published an interesting report on the apelike swamp dwellers of New Guinea. This strange race of human beings has dwelt in the swamps from times which antedate the oldest native traditions, and it is evidently on the highroad to becoming a distinct variety of animal. The swamp dwellers have lost three inches in stature and, while retaining muscular arms and a robust trunk, have short and slender legs. Walking always in water or on moist ground, they have feet with long, fragile looking toes, which they place on the ground "like wooden feet." Walking on hard ground makes their feet bleed, and, unlike the ordinary natives, whose skin is everywhere tight and smooth, the outline of their loins is obscured by folds of skin. "More apelike than any human being that I have seen," is the concluding criticism of the British administrator. It is probable of course that this effort of nature to create a new species of amphibious human being with flat swimming and wading feet and degenerate physique will be defeated by civilizing agencies. Fifty years hence the last recognizable specimens of this queer race will perhaps have incased their paddle feet in boots. Perhaps their women will be wearing high heeled shoes. But the record of their existence is interesting.

The Ram Feast.

In Morocco the strange season of the Mohammedan new year, beginning March 9, is generally called "Ait-el-Hanwela," the ram feast. The people of Morocco pay more elaborate attention to the item of sacrifice than any other Moslems. In every town a supreme offering of a ram or he goat takes place at the door of the principal mosque. Immediately after it is struck by the official imam in presence of the multitude it is flung on the shoulders of a stalwart Moor, who, exerting his utmost strength, runs like a deer through the narrow streets, pursued by a rabble. The poor animal is pelted with stones by boys and is jeered at with execrations from every house, as it is reputed to be carrying the sins of the people. The man rushes along with his burden till he reaches the door of the cadi's palace. If the animal is still breathing, the augury is excellent, for good luck is to be expected all through the year. But if the ram is dead all sorts of evil prognostications are muttered.

The Charitable Americans.

The Americans are looked upon by the peoples of Europe as the most wasteful persons in the world, and they do spend their money with a freedom unknown elsewhere because they have the money to spend. But with all their apparent carelessness there is no country in the world nor is there record of any in which the people devote so much to the welfare of the unfortunate and the wretched. The practice has become a habit and is looked upon rightly enough as an obligation. No one can free himself from it. Every one has a neighbor somewhere, and he will not fulfill his obligation merely by denying himself of some luxury or pleasure unless the self denial benefits his unfortunate neighbor.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Happiness.

Happiness? Sooth to say, it does not exist, or, rather, destiny serves it out to us in fractions, in small doses, homeopathically. Happiness is made up of halts. In the rough road stage of life, so long and yet so short, there are furtive moments when we sit down by the wayside and would gladly stop there, go no farther, sleep a little on the good earth which will one day embrace us. And immediately the march, march, of Bossuet rings out and urges us on. A halt? Why? Up and on, quick; we must hark forward; life continues. We rise and take up our burden again. March! March!—Jules Claretie.

Would Help Her Out.

Mrs. Hiram—You may stay until your week is up, Bridget, but when you go I must tell you I won't be able to write you a letter of recommendation.

Bridget—Don't let yer want of eddication imbarrass ye, madam. Oi'll write it fur ye, an' ye can make yer mark to it.—Philadelphia Press.

Hardly a Love Match.

Miss Smilax—And so Miss Passe and Mr. Gotnix really got married. Was it a love match?

Mary—On the contrary, I should call it a hate match.

Miss Smilax—Why? I don't understand you.

Mary—Why, she hated to be an old maid, and he hated to be poor.

Today.

Happy boys! Enjoy your playtime now and come again to study and to feel the birch rod and the ferule tomorrow. Sport, boys, while you may, for the morrow cometh with the birch rod and the ferule, and after that another morrow with troubles of its own. —Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Their Privilege.

Applicant—And if we want certain changes made in the flat—

Janitor—Well, when people want 'em very bad they generally move.—Brooklyn Life.

Something Missing.

Little Mildred, aged three, said one day when she stood up:

"Isn't it funny when folks stand up they haven't any laps?"—Little Chronicle.